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CHRISTIAN BAPTISM,

AS USUALLY PRACTISED IN

CONGREGATIONAL CHURCHES.

An Exposition and Defence.

BY

T. G. CRIPPEN.

WITH INTRODUCTORY NOTE

BY

GEORGE S. BARRETT, D.D.

ΝΙΨΟΝ · ΑΝΟΜΗΜΑΤΑ · ΜΗ · ΜΟΝΑΝ · ΟΨΙΝ

"WASH THY SINS, NOT THY FACE ONLY."

Inscription in an Ancient Greek Baptistry.

London:

CONGREGATIONAL UNION OF ENGLAND & WALES,
MEMORIAL HALL, FARRINGTON STREET.

1895.

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Introductory Note.

I have been asked to write a few words introducing Mr. Crippen's little book to the kindly notice of the ministers and members of our Congregational Churches, and I gladly comply with the request. For many years past I have felt the want of some compact and yet satisfactory handbook on Christian Baptism that I could give to candidates for church membership and others who were anxious to know what was the true meaning, and the right administration, of this initiatory sacrament of the Christian Church, and who had been impressed by the arguments used by our Baptist brethren in defence and support of their distinctive position. If I were not afraid of even appearing to cast an undeserved censure on these brethren of ours amongst the Baptists, I should be tempted to say that many of them

have urged their arguments with great pertinacity and force, and that in many instances, especially among young converts, we have lost and they have gained in consequence. I am unable to blame those who believe in "Believers' Baptism" for the zeal they manifest in its defence, but I have sometimes thought that those of us who are Pædo-baptists might learn a lesson from our brethren's enthusiasm for their distinctive faith, and that there was some danger of silence on our distinctive belief creating the impression that we had little or nothing to say for Infant Baptism. And, as I have said, I have often wished for some little book that, dealing with the whole subject in a large and scholarly way, might be put into the hands of those seeking to be rightly guided in this difficult and disputed question. It is no disparagement to Dr. Clemance's excellent little tractate to say that, with all its value, it has left room for a work like the present volume, and I think Congregational ministers generally will

agree with me, when they have read this book, in saying that it is just such a work as has been desired for many years past. It has not been published, I need hardly say, by the Congregational Union with any aggressive intent. We have no desire to engage in warfare with brethren who are so near to us, and whom we honour and love so truly, as our Baptist brethren.

For my own part, I should rejoice to see both wings of the Congregational "way" united in each locality in one Congregational Church, with the question of Baptism left to the conviction of each individual member. We are one in everything but this, and I have never been able to believe that on a question confessedly not of primary, but of secondary, importance we are justified in remaining apart. The whole of English and American and Australian Christianity would gain by the loyal and intelligent union of the two denominations.

At the same time, and while things are as

they are, we have our own distinctive witness to maintain, and it is to assist in this witness that my friend Mr. Crippen has written this little book. That all readers, even among Congregationalists, will agree with every word in the book I do not expect, but I am sanguine that our ministers and people generally will find in it a strong, lucid, temperate statement of our case, based all through on the teaching of Scriptures and the practices of the primitive church.

With these brief words I heartily commend this work to the Congregational churches and ministers of this and other lands.

G. S. B.

Norwich, March 12th, 1895.

CHRISTIAN BAPTISM.

Introduction.

“Go ye and make disciples of all the nations ; baptizing them into the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.” These words embody one of the latest injunctions of our Lord Jesus Christ; and accordingly all Christians, except a very small minority, have from the first regarded the rite thus ordained as obligatory on all who enter into Christian discipleship. Yet it is scarcely possible to imagine a question, in any way relating to the ordinance, on which the most contradictory opinions are not maintained often with intolerant zeal. Many of these questions are variously answered according to mental or spiritual bias, or ecclesiastical prejudice; and others, according to the diverse meaning attached to more or less ambiguous words—such as “Church,” “Christian,” “Disciple,” “Regenerate,” &c. Even

the true signification of the word "baptize" is keenly contested; it is disputed what is necessary to constitute a valid baptism; to whom it should be administered; whether it is efficient, or merely symbolical; if the latter, what it represents; if the former, what are its effects. The opinions held on all these points are largely interdependent, though not entirely so; and are so widely at variance with one another that, while some think the rite a bare symbol, obligatory only because of a positive command, others imagine its due performance to be virtually indispensable to eternal salvation.

In discussing these opinions, it is desirable to begin with accurate definition. It is well known that, from a remote antiquity, washing as a religious rite was habitually practised both by Jews and Gentiles. The occasions of this observance were various; sometimes it was preparatory to an act of worship, sometimes it was a ritual purification on account of actual or ceremonial uncleanness, and among the Jews,

at a comparatively late period in their history, it was part of the ritual on receiving a proselyte from among the heathen. To some, at least, of these religious washings the Greek-speaking Jews applied the name of "baptism"; and when the son of Zacharias, who proclaimed the near-approaching Kingdom of God, administered a ceremonial washing to his disciples, the populace instinctively conferred on him the title, "John the Baptist."

We may, therefore, conveniently define baptism as "a religious washing," and Christian baptism as "washing religiously administered in accordance with the institution of Jesus Christ." We purpose in the following pages to consider—(1) the meaning of this ordinance; (2) the manner in which, and (3) the persons to whom, it should be administered; (4) the effect of the rite on those who are duly baptized; concluding with a discussion of several questions of subordinate, but by no means of trivial importance.

I.—What is the Meaning of Christian Baptism?

Between the baptism administered by John and that instituted by our Lord Jesus Christ there is, if not a close connection, at least an evident relation. We cannot, therefore, feel that we are on sure ground as to the meaning of the latter, unless we know the significance which a pious Jew would attach to the former. To this end we must consider not only the ritual baptisms which, being prescribed by the law of Moses, entered into the every-day life of the people, but some religious washings which are mentioned as being practised in the times before the law.

When Jacob felt that his clan was disgraced by the slaughter of the Shechemites, he bade them "Put away the strange gods that were among them, and *purify* themselves, and change their garments" (Gen. xxxv. 2, 3). Washing is

not named, but it is clearly implied; and only after this was done did Jacob dare to erect the altar at Bethel. When the Hebrews, lately delivered out of Egypt, came to Sinai, they were bidden to "sanctify themselves and wash their garments" (Ex. xix. 10, 14); only after this could they hear the voice of God, and enter into covenant with Him. When Aaron and his sons were to be set apart for the official priesthood, it was ordained that they should first be "washed with water" (Ex. xxix. 4); only after this might they assume the holy garments and offer the appointed sacrifices.

The ritual baptisms of the Jews were enjoined in a great variety of cases; the chief of which were certain bodily disorders, and contact with a leper, a corpse, or the carcase of an unclean beast. In all these cases the rite was evidently symbolical of religious purification; a significance which was emphasised in the traditional baptism of proselytes, whereby was represented a cleansing away of the filth of heathenism,

preparatory to admission among the covenant people. In this case, and in the ante-legal religious washings, there was added to the thought of religious purification the further idea of entrance into some special relation with God, either of consecration, covenant, or service. It was much the same with John's baptism. The cleansing it represented was moral rather than ceremonial; for it was closely associated with Repentance, Confession, and Amendment, in order to the remission of sins (see Matt. iii. 6, 8, 11; Mark i. 4, 5; Luke iii. 3, 8): and there was the further idea of entrance into that special relation with God which was involved in the reception of His promised kingdom.

This thought of initiation comes into special prominence in 1 Cor. x. 2. The whole Hebrew nation is there said to have been "baptized unto (literally *into*) Moses"; that is, initiated into a new stage of national life, wherein they were pledged to him as their leader. The same thought appears in Acts xix.

1-5 ; there were disciples at Ephesus who had participated in the baptism of John, but had scarcely an elementary knowledge of Jesus ; these, when further instructed, were "baptized into the Name of the Lord Jesus," as if thereby formally committed to an acknowledgment of His Lordship.

These two ideas of Purification and Initiation are combined in the direction given by Peter to the inquirers on the Day of Pentecost (Acts ii. 38) ; "Repent, and be baptized every one of you in (literally *upon*) the name of Jesus Christ, unto remission of sins." Their baptism was to represent, by a well understood symbol, that moral purification, the desire for which is of the essence of true repentance, and is an indispensable condition of remission of sins. It was to indicate, moreover, their entrance into *new relations* with the lately crucified and now risen Jesus of Nazareth ; such relations, namely, as are involved in the full recognition of His Christhood.

The persons baptized at Pentecost were, all of them, Jews or proselytes ; and such, presumably, were the twelve men at Ephesus. Cornelius, too (Acts x. 2, 22), was virtually a proselyte ; though in all likelihood he was not one formally. All these, as well as the Samaritans mentioned in Acts viii. 12, 16, were already believers in One God ; and had some conception, however dim, of the Divine Fatherhood—see Isaiah lxiii. 16 ; John viii. 41. Their reception of the Gospel was, therefore, essentially a recognition of Jesus as Lord and Christ ; and, accordingly they were “baptized into, or upon (confession of), His Name.” But the great commission (Matt. xxviii. 19-20) was to make disciples of all the nations—atheists, deists, pantheists, dualists, and polytheists. These must be led to acknowledge not merely Jesus as Saviour and Lord, but the One God and Father of all ; and were, therefore, to be baptized into the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.

It is desirable here to guard against a possible

misunderstanding. The words of institution in the English authorised version, following a mistranslation in the Latin Vulgate, seem to direct the performance of the baptismal rite "*in* the Name," as if "by the authority" of the Blessed Trinity; suggesting that the administrator acts as the agent, or deputy, of the Most High. The phrase thus mistranslated is habitually used, both in Latin and in English, to claim Divine authority for ecclesiastical acts and utterances. Now, in Col. iii. 17 we are taught to "do all in the name of the Lord Jesus," that is, as His servants, under His immediate direction; and, doubtless, any religious rite ordained by Him should be performed in this spirit. Possibly, this *may* be the meaning of Acts x. 48, where the phrase is the same as in Col. iii. 17, viz., that Peter, in the name of the Lord, commanded the baptism of the Gentile Cornelius and his friends; none but Jews, Samaritans, and avowed proselytes, having previously received Christian baptism. But the words of Our Lord in Matt. xxviii. 19, can have

no such significance. His witnesses were commanded to baptize, not *in*, but, "*into* (or *unto*) the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost."

On the other hand, Acts x. 48 may be explained with reference to John iii. 22, 26; iv. 1, 2. If a repentant sinner, desiring to be enrolled among the disciples of Jesus, had received the initiatory rite from His own hand, that would surely have been an engagement on His part to bestow pardon and grace on condition of a steadfast faith. But the baptisms administered by our Lord's earliest disciples are accounted His own act; and the same must hold good whenever the rite is performed by His authority.

From the foregoing considerations it would appear that the significance of Christian baptism is threefold:—

I. It represents, by a significant and most suggestive *Emblem*, the cleansing of the inner man; the removal, not merely of the stains

contracted by former ill-doing, but of the taint of a perverted will; in other words, deliverance both from the guilt and power of sin.

II. Having been ordained by the Lord Jesus to be administered to all, of every nation, who become His disciples, it is at once an assertion of His Lordship, and a *Pledge* on His part of this double cleansing to all who are willing to accept it. But the power of acceptance or rejection still remains unaffected by the rite; and that continues true for all which He once said to Peter (John xiii. 8), "If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with Me."

III. It is an outward and visible sign of entrance into Christian discipleship; whereby God is owned as Father, His only begotten Son as Saviour, and His Holy Spirit as Instructor and Guide. It is, so to speak, the putting on of Christ's livery; and is thus, on our part, a *Sacrament* in the original sense of the word—the initiatory Sacrament of Christian life.

Baptism is frequently spoken of as "an act of Dedication." The phrase is not free from ambiguity; but with due explanation it may be accepted as fairly describing the ordinance from its human side. He who, with adequate knowledge of the leading truths of the Gospel, voluntarily enters into Christian discipleship, and in token thereof is baptized into the Threefold Name, must be regarded as thereby performing an act of self-dedication, more or less complete. And he who presents his child for baptism must be understood as thereby engaging to do all in his power to bring up that child as a disciple of the Lord Jesus; an engagement which may be not improperly called a dedication of the child to the service of its Redeemer.

Whether or not baptism is correctly spoken of as "the rite of initiation into the Christian Church" must depend on the sense in which the very ambiguous word "Church" is employed. It need scarcely be said that baptism *does not* initiate into those local or connexional

religious societies called "Churches," whether Congregational, Methodist, or other, in the very constitution of which baptism is dissociated from Church-membership. On the other hand, there are ecclesiastical theorists in whose vocabulary the phrase "the Church" signifies neither more nor less than the aggregate of baptized persons. If, however, by "the Church" is understood "the whole number of avowed adherents of the Christian religion throughout the world," it seems certain that, in the earliest ages of Christianity, baptism was understood to be the formal act of initiation into *that* Church, and it was probably intended so to be. In those days there were so few inducements to an insincere profession, that in all likelihood the "visible Church" differed little—at least, as to its adult members—from the totality of sincere believers. Yet even then there was a distinction, not always duly recognised, between the "visible Church" and that "Holy Catholic Church" which is happily described as "the

blessed company of all faithful people." Into this true spiritual Church it is evident that men are not initiated by baptism—for some, like Simon Magus, though baptized, continue "in the gall of bitterness and in the bond of iniquity"; while others (not merely catechumens, but members of sects like the Friends, who conscientiously reject all sacramental rites), though unbaptized, bring forth abundantly the fruits of the Spirit to the glory of God. In short, whatever the original intention may have been, the neglect and abuse of discipline, the ramifications of sects, and other causes, have so wrought that, in the present day, baptism can scarcely be accounted "the rite of initiation into the Church" in any sense; unless, indeed, by "the Church" is understood the entire number of professed adherents to the Christian religion, irrespective of genuine faith or personal character.

It may be convenient here to consider briefly the meaning of that baptism to which our Lord

submitted at the hands of John. In His case "who did no sin," Ritual Purification and the Baptism of Repentance were alike out of the question; the *emblem* and the *pledge* of inward cleansing were equally inapplicable; and the idea of entrance into Christian discipleship is absurd. We may, nevertheless, find a probable explanation in the fact that, to the multitude, the rite administered by John was the Baptism of Repentance; "they were baptized of him in Jordan, confessing their sins" (Matt. iii. 6; cf. Luke iii. 3). He who alone was "separate from sinners," by participating in that symbolic washing, testified—so to speak—His *solidarity* with them; He entered, as it were, into a visible partnership with repentant sinners, that He might bear their iniquities. And if, as has been said, "He sorrowed and repented for their sins," He was performing no work of supererogation, but only fulfilling His mission. Thus it became Him to fulfil all righteousness.

Another, but perfectly consistent, explanation

is suggested by the office which He assumed as "High priest over the House of God." The ritual of priestly consecration consisted of washing, anointing, and putting on the priestly garments (Exod. xxix. 4-6). The latter, of necessity, He had already done by His Incarnation; and, having received from the Baptist a ritual washing, He was "anointed with the Holy Ghost" (Matt. iii. 16, with Acts x. 38).

II.—In what Manner should Baptism be Administered ?

At least *three* distinct methods have been adopted by various sections of the Christian Church in the administration of baptism. (1) In some very early works of Christian Art, the recipient is seen standing in water, while the administrator *pours* water on his head. (2) The most usual mode in the ancient Church appears to have been complete *immersion*, generally thrice repeated; this practice is still maintained in the Greek and some other Eastern Churches; it continued in common use in Western Europe as late as the thirteenth century, and is still insisted upon as indispensable by the English and American Baptists. (3) In the Roman and Anglican Churches, and in all the Reformed Churches except the Baptists, the mode is accounted a matter of indifference; but in actual practice *pouring* or *sprinkling* is almost universal.

The following are the chief arguments by which it is sought to prove that baptism can only be properly administered by complete immersion.

1. It is said that the Greek word "baptizo" (from which "baptism" is derived) always means "to dip," and nothing else.

2. That wherever the word occurs in the New Testament, that meaning is natural and obvious; as is proved by references to "much water," and to "going down into" and "coming up from" the water.

3. That only so can the act fairly express its symbolical import, as emblematic of Death and Resurrection.

4. That the ritual purifications of the Jews, to which the term was applied, were always performed by immersion, especially the baptism of proselytes.

5. That such was the universal practice of the apostles, and of the Primitive Church.

If these statements could be substantiated, there would be an end of the question. But every one of them is fairly open to dispute. It is frankly conceded that the word "baptism" is often used where immersion is evidently intended; that some of the Jewish purifications, especially the baptism of proselytes (at a relatively late period) were so performed; and that immersion was the most usual mode of baptism in the early Christian centuries.* But these facts come far short of settling the matters in dispute; which is, not whether immersion is a legitimate mode of baptism, but whether it is *the only* legitimate method.

To allege, on either side of the controversy, the supposed universal practice of the apostles, is merely begging the question. As to the practice of the Ancient Church, the same evidence which proves the general prevalence

* In England, in 816, baptism otherwise than by complete immersion was forbidden by law. Immersion was the most usual, though not unvarying, mode, as late as 1560.

of immersion, proves also that, in exceptional cases, persons were baptized by pouring or sprinkling of water. The oldest account we have of the mode of baptism is in the "Teaching of the Apostles," an anonymous treatise assigned to about the year 100 A.D. In it the pouring of water on the head is prescribed, not merely (as in later usage) in case of sickness, but whenever there is not sufficient water for immersion; and, though this method was deemed irregular, the lack of immersion was not thought to render the baptism invalid. This, however, only shows the prevailing opinion of Christians in the second and third centuries, and is quite inconclusive as to the original institution. With regard to the Jewish baptism of proselytes, our earliest information is derived from the Talmud, which was compiled when Christian baptism had been practised for at least three hundred years.

The word "baptizo," from which "baptism" is derived, is of rare occurrence in the Classics;

and is, perhaps, found more frequently in the New Testament than in all pre-Christian literature put together. It is, however, itself derived from a simpler and very common word, "bapto," of which the primary and most usual meaning is, undoubtedly, to "dip," but of which there are more than twenty secondary meanings, many of them totally unconnected with dipping. To argue that because "bapto" usually means "to dip," "baptism" must always signify "immersion" is as unreasonable as to argue that, because "to feel" usually means "to perceive by touch," our "feelings" must always be perceptions so acquired.

Even in the Classics the word "baptize" does not invariably signify to immerse. Plutarch speaks of baptizing a wine skin, "but it is not the rule to dip"; and the emperor Julian mentions one who "baptized his desires (or loves) in wine." On the other hand, when the word is found with the indisputable sense of im-

mersion, the meaning is not, usually, to dip or plunge, but to sink, overwhelm, or drown: it is thus used twice in the Greek text of Æsop's fables.

In the Septuagint, the ancient Greek translation of the Old Testament, the word "baptize" only occurs twice, and "baptism" not at all. The first example is in 2 Kings v. 14, where Naaman having been told (verse 10) to wash in Jordan seven times, "went down and baptized himself." It is likely enough that he "dipped," as the Authorized Version expresses it; but the Hebrew word does not prove that he did so, for it is the same as is used in Gen. xxxvii. 31, of Joseph's coat, which would rather be stained or splashed than dipped in blood, to suggest the fate of its owner. The other example is in Isaiah xxi. 4, where the translators have either mistaken the sense, or followed a different text from that now extant. The Hebrew says, "fearfulness affrighted me," but the Greek, "lawlessness baptized me;" the meaning seems to be "over-

whelmed," and the passage may fairly be quoted in favour of immersion.

But the contrary is the case with the only two passages where the word is found in the Apocrypha. In Judith xii. 7, that heroine is said to have "baptized herself in a fountain of water by the (enemies') camp. . . so she came in clean." Ceremonial rather than personal cleanness is intended; and it is in the last degree unlikely that the narrator would make Judith immerse herself in such a place, and in such circumstances. Still more conclusive is Sirach xxxiv. 25, "He that baptizeth himself after touching a dead body." The indisputable reference is to the purification enjoined in Numbers xix. 9-22; which is four times directed to be performed, not by immersion but by sprinkling. To this doubtless the well-known passage in Ezekiel xxxvi. 25, refers: "Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean."

Turning now to the New Testament, we find in Hebrews ix. 10, mention of "divers bap-

tisms" enjoined by the law of Moses. One of these is specified in ver. 13, and is distinctly said to have consisted of sprinkling. The object of all these legal baptisms was not so much physical cleanliness as ritual purity; and for this purpose, as we learn from Mark vii. 4, the tradition of the elders ordained "baptism of cups and pots and brazen vessels and couches." No doubt the cups and pots would be immersed; but the immersing of couches, large enough for several persons to recline on at once, is absurd. In the same context (Mark vii. 3-5) we read of a ceremonial washing of the hands, with the same object of ritual rather than physical cleanness. The word "wash" is used as if identical with "baptize"; and it is well known that washing the hands was usually performed, in that age and country, not, as among ourselves, by dipping them in a basin, but by pouring water upon them, as Elisha "poured water on the hands of Elijah" (2 Kings iii. 11). Here we have a clear instance of

baptism by pouring, not immersion. A very similar passage is Luke xi. 38, where a Pharisee wondered that Jesus "had not first baptized before dinner." In this place it is altogether unreasonable to think that immersion could be intended.

John "the Baptist" is constantly spoken of by some controversialists as immersing his disciples; but it is nowhere affirmed in the New Testament that such was his practice, and he is represented as doing otherwise in some of the earliest examples of Christian art. From John iii. 25-6, it seems clear that his baptism was, in its ruling idea, a ritual purification; and though we may accept the long subsequent testimony of the Talmud and the later Rabbins, that total immersion was insisted on in the case of proselytes, it is surely unlikely that the details of proselyte baptism would be observed in the case of those Pharisees who attached themselves to John in expectation of the kingdom of God. The reference to "much water," or, more

literally, "many waters," at Ænon (*i.e.*, Wells) in John iii. 23, is nothing to the point. If John acted on the theory of ritual purification, he would need "much water," not for the purpose of immersion, but because, according to the law, whatever was touched by an unclean person or thing became unclean (Num. xix. 21-2; Lev. xi. 31-5) *except* "a fountain or pit where there is plenty of water." Or John may have selected Ænon for the convenience which an abundant water supply would offer to a great concourse of people.

Neither is anything proved by the phrases "into the water" (Acts viii. 38), and "out of the water" (Mark i. 10). They are identical with those found in Matt. xvii. 1, 9, where Jesus went up "into a mountain," and, according to the oldest copies, came down "out of the mountain." Surely, none would contend for the sense of immersion in the mountain! It is likely that, when John baptized in Jordan, the recipients, even if not immersed, would stand in the water;

but in the case of Philip and the eunuch, it is doubtful whether, along the whole desert-way, from Jerusalem to Gaza (Acts viii. 26), there would be water sufficiently deep for immersion. There are several brooks; but they are merely winter torrents, not one of them is a perennial stream.

In four other baptisms narrated in the New Testament, while immersion cannot be absolutely denied, it seems highly improbable. On the day of Pentecost three thousand converts were baptized (Acts ii. 41); and, seeing that their spiritual awakening took place shortly after the third hour of the day, nine in the morning by our modern reckoning (see v. 15), it would be necessary to suppose an unbroken series of immersions for something over eight hours, at the rate of nearly six per minute. Such celerity is not impossible, with twelve apostles to baptize; but considering the limited water supply and small number of available pools in Jerusalem, it is altogether unlikely. The

baptism of Paul is recorded in Acts ix. 18. Here the rite seems to have been performed immediately, on the suggestion of Ananias, without leaving the house in quest of a place suitable for immersion. In the case of Cornelius and his friends (Acts x. 47), the words of Peter suggest rather the bringing of water to the converts, than taking them to the water; and the baptism of the Philippian jailer and his household (Acts xvi. 33), seems closely connected with washing the aching backs of Paul and Silas. But undue stress must not be laid on these examples, as the grossest improbability is apt to vanish in view of strongly preconceived opinions.

All these are cases of *literal* baptism. But the figurative use of the word is highly instructive. This is most commonly found in the phrase "Baptize with (literally *in*) the Holy Ghost," which occurs six times, viz.: Matt. iii. 11; Mark i. 8; Luke iii. 16; John i. 33; Acts i. 5; ii. 16, and *cf.* Cor. xii. 13. Now the Holy Spirit is spoken of

eleven times as being received, twenty times as dwelling in men or filling them, and no less than twenty-three times as falling, descending, anointing, coming upon, or being poured out. The visible sign of His presence, in fulfilment of the sign of a spiritual baptism, was "cloven tongues like as of fire, which sat upon each of them"; *cf.* Acts i. 5, with ii. 3. But *in no single case* is the gift of the Holy Spirit represented under the figure of immersion; which indeed would seem irreverent, and almost grotesque.

In Matt. iii. 11, there is mention made of a baptism "with fire." If this is to be understood, according to the general opinion, of a gracious and spiritual influence, the figure of immersion in fire seems unreasonable: a more natural allusion would be to the "live coal," with which the prophet's lips were touched in Isaiah vi. 6; with which may be compared the "tongues of fire" in Acts ii. 3. But if the baptism with fire is to be understood of judgment, in connection with the "unquenchable fire" which is to consume the

chaff (Matt iii. 12), it seems more natural to suppose a reference to the fire that fell upon Sodom (*cf.* Psal. xi. 6), or to the kindling "breath of the Lord" in Isaiah xxx. 33, than to the "lake of fire and brimstone" in Rev. xx. 10, 15; for whatever be the date of the Revelation, it is certainly much later than John the Baptist.

A plausible argument in favour of immersion is sometimes based on the words of our Lord, in Matt. xx. 22 and Luke xii. 20, where He speaks of His impending sufferings under the figure of a baptism. It is possible that He had in mind the Greek recension of Isaiah xxi. 4, "lawlessness baptized me," above referred to; and it is argued that we commonly speak of being plunged in, or overwhelmed with, distress. But this is far from being conclusive: for there are upwards of thirty places where wrath, indignation, fury, contempt, or cursing are spoken of as "poured out;" and these would amply justify the metaphor, both in Isaiah and in the recorded words of our Lord, without any reference to immersion.

There remain two figurative references to baptism, where the whole force of the figure is lost if immersion be insisted on. In 1 Cor. x. 2, the Hebrews "were all baptized . . . in the cloud and in the sea." They certainly were not immersed in either (see Exodus xiii. 21-2, xiv. 19-22); and those who were immersed did not share in the baptism. In 1 Peter iii. 21-2, baptism is represented as the antitype of Noah's Ark; and the salvation of Noah and his family consisted in the fact that they escaped immersion.

In opposition to these examples, only two figurative passages can be cited—Rom. vi. 4 and (the same, with slight variation) Colos. ii. 12, "Buried with Him in baptism." This phrase is urged, with wearisome reiteration, to prove that immersion is of the essence of baptism, because no other method would enact the semblance of a burial and resurrection. Now, it is a general rule of criticism that uncommon words or figures must be interpreted by such as are

more usual, and not *vice versá*. According to this rule, even if immersion did enact the semblance of a burial and resurrection, the two passages last cited could not be allowed to determine the sense of the more numerous passages from which—as we have seen—the idea of immersion is excluded.

But, in fact, there is no such resemblance as the argument supposes. The burial referred to is not an ancient Celtic or Teutonic, or modern English burial, in which the body is lowered into a pit and covered with earth. It is that of our Lord Himself, which was performed according to the usual custom of the Jews, Egyptians, and Romans; the body was deposited in a rock-hewn chamber, entered, not by a “pit-hole,” but by a doorway which was closed by a rolling stone. What analogy there can be between a downward plunge and *such* a burial it is hard to conceive.

Even if some analogy could be traced, the passage in Romans says nothing of a symbolic or quasi-dramatic burial. It is,

literally, "We-were-buried-with Him, therefore, by-means-of the baptism into [His] death"—that is, by our baptism into the death of Christ, we were made partakers also of His burial and resurrection. It might almost seem as if Paul foresaw the danger of his words being misunderstood; and, to guard against this, added the illustrations of "planting" and "crucifixion" (Rom. vi. 5, 6), surely not ritual and symbolical, but mystical and spiritual. And this must govern the sense of the similar and later-written passage in Colossians, "Having-been-buried-with Him in [our] baptism."

The death and resurrection of which baptism may rightly be accounted a figure are not, like those of the Lord Jesus, a bodily death and resurrection, but "a death unto sin, and a new birth unto righteousness"—which are the same thing under a different metaphor, as "the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost." Their appropriate symbol, therefore, is not burial, but purification, such as

under the law of Moses was quite as frequently performed by sprinkling as by immersion. From this consideration, as well as from the very elastic meaning and varying use of the word, it follows that while immersion is a perfectly legitimate mode of baptism, it is by no means essential. The Divine institution is just as fully complied with when the rite is administered by pouring or sprinkling.

There is another consideration which should not be altogether ignored. The Jewish dispensation was one of Law; the Christian is one of Liberty: that was ritual, this is spiritual. Doubtless, if it were proved that "baptizo" had, always and everywhere, the uniform significance of "immerse," and nothing else, the terms of our Lord's institution would preclude all liberty to vary from the ritual which He appointed. But the contrary has been clearly demonstrated: and it follows that, albeit immersion was the most usual (though not invariable) practice of the early Christian ages, the Church has liberty

to profit by the teachings of experience, and adapt its ritual to the exigencies of climate, national and social customs, and the like. This liberty has been exercised by all Christians, Baptists included, in the details of the Lord's Supper, the use of metrical hymns, church music, church buildings, &c., and why not also in this matter? "For, brethren, ye have been called unto liberty ; only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another" (Gal. v. 13).

III.—To Whom should Baptism be Administered?

The commission to “make disciples of all the nations” (Matt. xxviii. 19), is variously reported in Mark xvi. 15, “Go ye into all the world, and preach the Gospel to the whole creation.” It is there added, “He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved, but he that disbelieveth shall be condemned.”* It is evident that the injunctions to “make disciples” and to “baptize” are co-extensive; but much diversity of opinion exists as to the kind or degree of discipleship which warrants the administration of the

* Mark xvi. 9-20 are wanting in the two oldest copies, and are probably no part of the original Gospel. But there is no reason for doubting that they are an authentic record, and of very early date.

Sacramental rite. The opinions on this subject are, substantially, four, viz. :—

1. It is held by the Church of Rome, and by most of the unreformed Churches, that the commission must be taken in its widest possible extent; so that Baptism is to be administered to “every creature” of human birth who can be induced to accept it, not excluding the infants of heathen parents, or dying persons in a state of unconsciousness.

2. It is generally held in the Anglican and Lutheran Churches that baptism should be administered to all who ask it; and to all children on whose behalf it is claimed by their parents or natural guardians.

3. It is held by most adherents of the “Reformed” or Presbyterian Churches, that only those adults should be baptized who make a credible profession of faith in Christ, but that the rite should also be administered to the children of one or both believing parents.

4. It is held by the "Baptists" that none ought to be baptized except those who avow their personal faith in Christ; that avowal being usually understood to imply a conscious spiritual awakening, and to require the credential afforded by a life of practical godliness.

(1) The Romish practice grows out of a belief that no unbaptized person can possibly be saved. In very early times a notion became current that, independent of any personal ill-desert, all men inherited (not merely a perverted will, but) actual guilt from a fallen ancestor. The whole human race had thus become "a mass of perdition," from whence the only way of escape was through the Church; and into this there could be no entrance but by baptism. Accordingly, all unbaptized infants, whether of believing or unbelieving parents, all Jews and Mahommedans, however devout, and the most earnest seekers after God among the heathen, were alike consigned to eternal damnation! This monstrous belief was founded mainly on John iii. 5,

which was so interpreted that entrance into the Kingdom of God was identified with salvation. It is scarce likely to need confutation for any reader of these pages. It represents God, on the one hand, as "not willing that any should perish," and as so loving the world as to give His only begotten Son for its redemption; and on the other, as making the virtue of that redemption dependent on a ceremony, participation in which may be unconscious, or its omission involuntary!* This is surely ascribing to Him an inconsistency or capriciousness which would be inconceivable in a moderately good man.

(2) The Lutheran and Anglican practice appears to grow out of a modified survival of the Romish theory, qualified by common sense and Christian charity. The Anglican standards, however, speak of baptism as "generally," but not absolutely, "necessary to salvation."

* It is only fair to note that the Romish theologians admit an exception in favour of such as earnestly desire baptism, but are unable to obtain it.

A virtually identical practice is justified by some in the Free Churches, but on a different principle. The commission to teach and baptize, it is said, grew out of Christ's claim to the possession of "all authority in heaven and earth": baptism, therefore, is neither a profession of faith nor an initiation into Christian discipleship; but is simply an assertion on behalf of Christ, of His Lordship over every creature, and of His all-embracing love, who gave Himself to redeem every individual of the human race.

The weakest point in this last-named theory is its failure to explain the command to baptize "into the name of the" Blessed Trinity. It excludes all reference to belief, or personal character, or prospect of Christian education; and might equally justify the wholesale and clandestine baptisms said to be performed by some Romish missionaries in the East.

But the Unreformed and Anglican Churches usually require, as a preliminary to baptism, a formal demand from the person to be baptized, a

profession of the Christian Creed, and either a "renunciation of the devil and all his works," or a promise of obedience for the future. Seeing that infants, "by reason of their tender age, cannot perform" these conditions, the requisite demand, professions, &c., are made in their name by sponsors, who are supposed to hold a proxy for the unconscious child.

The general question of sponsorship will be dealt with hereafter. At present it may suffice to say that, although usually required, it is not accounted indispensable. When, on an emergency, a child has been baptized with water in the name of the Trinity, without sponsorial demand, profession, renunciation, or promise, the standards of the Anglican Church affirm that it is "lawfully and sufficiently baptized, and ought not to be baptized again." It is, indeed, represented as "expedient" that children so baptized should be brought into the Church for public reception; and in that case the sponsorial answers are made, not as a preliminary, but

after a baptism which is already declared to be "lawful and sufficient." This alone is enough to break down the whole sponsorial system.

It may be added, in view of the Romish and Anglican theories, that the penitent thief on the cross was undeniably saved without baptism; that if men do not believe and obey, or repent, their baptism—with or without sponsors—can avail them nothing; and that if men are not baptized they are not on that account excused for the neglect of those indispensable duties.

(3) The practice of the Presbyterian and of the Baptist Churches is virtually identical, except as regards the children of believing parents. Both insist, in the case of adult applicants, on a personal avowal of belief in and adhesion to Jesus Christ as Saviour and Lord. Both require that the avowal shall not be discredited by ungodly living. Both recognise the impossibility of distinguishing in all cases between a genuine and a feigned profession. But some difference exists as to the amount of knowledge, and degree

of Christian experience required. Some demand considerable religious intelligence, and a conscious spiritual awakening, followed by full purpose of self-consecration; while others accept as sufficient an honest assent to the elementary truths of the Gospel, and a course of conduct agreeable to the ordinary rules of Christian morality. This difference arises from diversity of judgment as to the minimum of knowledge, faith, and obedience necessary to entitle a person to the name of "Christian." In principle both are agreed, and this principle is that which seems to have been universally acted upon by the apostles and their associates.

(4) The Baptists differ from all other Christians, in denying the Scriptural authority, propriety, and validity of infant baptism; regarding that rite, howsoever or by whomsoever performed, as a nullity*; and re-baptizing—or, as they say,

* It is on this account, rather than with any reference to the fanatics of the sixteenth century, that they repudiate the name of "Anabaptists."

simply baptizing—those who, though baptized in infancy, adopt their opinions and enter their societies. The insistence by English Baptists on complete immersion is a mere coincidence, and is not universal among the rejectors of infant baptism. The Dutch Baptists, or Menonites, for example, regard the mode of administration as indifferent; while the Eastern Churches regularly baptize infants by immersion.

The arguments adduced by Baptists in favour of their peculiar opinions and practice are chiefly as follows:—

A.—No mention is found of baptizing infants in Holy Scripture; nor is there any evidence that such was the practice of the apostles, or of the primitive Church.

B.—The institution of baptism is so described as naturally to suggest that belief is an indispensable prerequisite; most of the baptisms recorded in the New Testament are distinctly

said to have followed upon profession of faith ; and of none can it be affirmed that they were not associated with such profession.

C.—Baptism is the badge of Christian discipleship ; but one cannot be truly a disciple of Christ without personal acceptance of Him as Lord and Saviour, and entire devotion to His service.

D.—It is contrary to the whole genius of Christianity that a religious rite should be performed on an infant, who is naturally incapable of consenting thereto ; and especially that a Sacrament should be administered to one who is incapable of either understanding the sign or contracting the covenant.

E.—If infants are eligible for baptism, they must equally have a right to participate in the Lord's Supper.

F.—The practice of baptizing infants has tended to obliterate the distinction between

the Church and the world ; and has been a fruitful parent of many superstitions.

These arguments are by no means despicable; when enforced by fervid rhetoric and vigorous sarcasm, they are often thought to be irresistible. We will therefore proceed to examine them seriatim.

(a) It is true that no baptism of an infant is expressly recorded in Holy Scripture. It is also true that, except in general terms or in figurative language, infants are only mentioned four or five times in the New Testament. The examples are : the Holy Child Jesus, His precursor John, the children slain on His account by Herod, the child—of uncertain age—whom He set in the midst as a pattern of humility, and the infants whom He took in His arms, saying, "Suffer the little children to come unto Me, for of such is the Kingdom of God." It would be equally a begging of the question to affirm that the apostles *did*, or that they *did not*,

baptize the infant children of believing parents ; but there is one consideration bearing on the point, on which surprisingly little stress has been laid, and which deserves serious attention. The apostles were, every one of them, Israelites; and it seems clear, from Rom. xi. 17-26, Gal. iii. 7-9, 26-8, and Eph. ii. 11-18, that Paul, at least (and presumably his colleagues), regarded the new fellowship of Christians as an extension of "the Commonwealth of Israel." But all their lives they had been familiar with the initiation of infants into the Hebrew Commonwealth by circumcision ; and Paul, as a Pharisee, had been accustomed to regard heathens as "unclean" ; but the children of Jews and Proselytes as "born in holiness." When a new rite, applicable to all, was substituted for one which was applicable only to males, it would seem inevitable that they should administer it to the children of their converts, unless they were otherwise instructed. Of such instruction there is not a trace to be found. And, while undue

stress must not be laid upon such passages as Acts ii. 39, it is surely most natural to take these things into account in our interpretation of 1 Cor. vii. 14: "Else were your children unclean, but now are they holy."

Whatever the apostolic usage may have been, it is beyond question that the baptism of infants was practised at a very early period in the history of the Church; and was then justified, as "a tradition derived from the apostles," by men who had far better opportunities of knowing the fact than could be enjoyed by any in the sixteenth or nineteenth century. Irenæus (who received his knowledge of apostolic institutions from Polycarp, an immediate disciple of the apostle John), writes as follows: "He came to save all by means of Himself; all, I say, who, through Him are *born again* to God, infants, and children, and boys, and youths, and old men."* The meaning of "born again" is evident from what he says

* "Against Heresies," II. xxii. 4.

elsewhere: "Giving to the disciples the power of regeneration unto God, He said to them, 'Go and teach all nations, baptizing them, &c.'"; and again, "that baptism which *is* regeneration to God."* Of baptismal regeneration in the Romish and Anglican sense we shall treat hereafter; it needs only to be noted here that with Irenaeus, as with many early Christian writers, regeneration signifies not a grace conferred, or an effect wrought, *by means of* baptism, but the rite itself.

The earliest recorded objection to the practice of infant baptism was raised by Tertullian, about the year 201; and his objection was not, chiefly, on the grounds urged by modern Baptists, but because he thought the rite conferred remission of sins. "Why," said he, "does the innocent period of life hasten to the remission of sins?

. . . Let them know how to ask for salvation, that you may seem to have given to him that asketh."†

* "Against Heresies," III. xvii. 1, and I. xxi. 1.

† "On Baptism," ch. 18.

It is an instructive fact that, while there is no known instance within the first *three* centuries of the baptism of an infant of non-Christian parents, there are only two authenticated instances in the first *ten* centuries of parents who were baptized Christians at the birth of their children, and of these children being baptized after attaining to years of discretion.*

(b) The baptisms recorded in the New Testament were, doubtless, usually on profession of faith; but there are two or three cases where this is by no means certain. Lydia (Acts xvi. 14, 15), having believed, "was baptized, and her household." The jailer at Philippi (Acts xvi. 32-4), having believed, "was baptized, he and all his, immediately"; and Paul baptized "the household of Stephanas" (1 Cor. i. 16). It is objected to this last example that, not more than four years afterwards, the household of

* See Historical note at the end.

Stephanas were commended as having "set themselves to minister to the saints," and it is, therefore, unlikely that there were infants among them at the time of their baptism. The objection is plausible, but quite inconclusive. If one should say, "During the last fifty years a certain noble family has presented a commendable example of high-toned morality," it would not, surely, be implied that, during all those years, the said family had never included infants to whom morality and immorality were alike impossible. Even this objection does not apply to the households of Lydia and of the jailer. In neither of these cases is it either said or certainly implied that any person actually believed except the head of the household.* We may be sure that Paul would not have baptized man, woman, or

* The adverb *panoiki*—"with all the household"—in Acts xvi. 34, qualifies "rejoiced," not "having believed." Even unbelievers might rejoice greatly at their escape from the earthquake, or at the diversion of the father or master from his purpose of suicide.

child who refused the rite or repudiated the name of a disciple; but Paul was "a Hebrew of the Hebrews," and would, therefore, regard the household as a unit, and its head as competent to enrol his or her children and slaves as disciples, unless they actively dissented. In this view he would be warranted by the analogous case of a proselyte under the Jewish law (see Exod. xii. 48), who was required not only himself to receive circumcision, but to impose on "all his males," whether infant or adolescent, the sign of the ancient covenant.

Moreover, when baptism is insisted upon as a "Profession of Faith," that phrase is commonly understood in what, for the sake of distinction, we may call the pietistic sense; *i.e.*, the faith professed is that conscious apprehension of Divine grace which follows upon instruction and spiritual awakening. If this be the purport of the ordinance, is it not unreasonable to ask [a] Why should such profession be made once for all, and never reiterated? [b] It sometimes—

we may hope but rarely—happens that a hypocrite, like Simon Magus, is “baptized in profession of faith”; if such a man should repent, and give evidence of a genuine faith, why should not his hypocritical baptism be esteemed a nullity? Yet Baptists never re-baptize repentant hypocrites. [c] And why should a pastor or other person administer a rite of which individual profession is the central feature? Self-immersion (or affusion) would be equally appropriate, and Smyth, the Se-baptist, may at least claim the merit of consistency.

(c) It is undeniable that our Lord does set before us, in Luke xiv. 26-7, 33, an ideal of discipleship so lofty that but few Christians in any age have attained to it; but the word “disciple” is constantly used by the evangelists in a much lower sense. We can scarcely think that even Luke restricts it to those who had reached the ideal, when he speaks (in vi. 17; xix. 37) of “a multitude of His disciples”; and in vi. 13-16,

he clearly admits the discipleship of the traitor. John (xii. 4) is more explicit, speaking of "Judas Iscariot, one of His disciples, which should betray Him"; and, in vi. 66, tells of "many of His disciples," who were so far from the ideal that they "went back, and walked no more with Him." The fact is that "disciple," like "scholar," is capable of being used in various, though related, significations. An Oxford professor might properly denounce as "no scholar" a man of large and varied attainments who should stumble in reading Livy or Plato; yet a school inspector would as properly acknowledge as "scholars" a company of little children struggling with the mysteries of the alphabet. If baptism be "the badge of Christian discipleship," it must be administered to all who are entitled to the name of disciple in its widest application.

(d) If baptism involved a profession of "faith" in what we have called the pietistic sense of the

word, its administration to infants would be an irreverent absurdity. But it is surely unreasonable to think that faith in this sense was professed by all the three thousand who were baptized on the day of Pentecost; and it certainly was not experienced by Simon Magus, though he is expressly said to have believed (Acts viii. 13). The order prescribed by our Lord in Matt. xxviii. 19-20, is, first make disciples, then baptize, afterwards teach.* When a child is born into a Christian household, it is surely the intention of the Master of Life that it should be a disciple from the earliest dawn of intelligence. To administer to such a child the Sacrament of incipient discipleship is no more unreasonable than to dress an infant prince in

* The grammatical structure of the sentence is, "Make disciples . . . baptizing . . . and teaching." It may be that the first is inclusive of the rest; but even so, it is surely not insignificant that the order is "baptizing and teaching" rather than "teaching and baptizing." If discipleship may be illustrated from the arrangements of a university, it would seem that baptism corresponds to matriculation, not graduation.

the uniform of the army with which he is to be identified, and in which he is one day to hold command. And experience has proved it to be helpful toward the Christian education of children, that they should be familiarised from very early childhood with the thought that they are (not "Christians" in the narrower sense of the word, but) actually disciples of Jesus, scholars in His school, lambs of His flock, on whom individually the Good Shepherd has set His Own mark.

(e) The cases of baptism and the Lord's Supper are not parallel. In the latter we eat and drink "in remembrance," which is impossible without previous instruction. Besides, there are warnings against eating without discernment; no such warning is found in regard to baptism. As early as the third century baptized infants were actually admitted to Communion. This was, doubtless, an abuse; yet it is questionable whether even this was not a less evil

than the later abuse of so "fencing" the Lord's table as to make it the peculiar heritage of a spiritual aristocracy.

(f) That infant baptism, misinterpreted or perverted, has been an occasion of superstition is undeniable. But the same is true of the Lord's Supper, the Lord's Day, the Christian ministry, the words of the Prophets and Apostles, and even those of our Lord Himself. And in the one case, as in the others, it was the perversion or abuse, not the use, from which the superstition arose. There is nothing so true or excellent but it is capable of being thus perverted into superstition; and if this were a sufficient objection to any religious practice, there would be an end of all religious observances whatever. The obliterating of distinctions between the Church and the world, so far as it has taken place, is due, not to infant baptism, but to the indiscriminate per-

formance of that rite,* and to the neglect or abuse of ecclesiastical discipline.

It should scarcely be necessary to notice a very feeble argument which is sometimes based on the fact that our Lord was baptized at the age of thirty years. The meaning of *that* baptism has been already considered; and whether or not the explanation there offered be correct, it is certain that the unique personality of Jesus Christ made His baptism altogether a thing apart. It differed so widely in significance from Christian baptism, whether of infants or believers, that no argument from the time of its administration can have any weight in the present controversy. Moreover, if His example in this matter of detail were binding on His followers, it should be equally so in respect of the

* The compulsory baptism of the Norsemen by King Olaf, and of the conquered Saxons by Charlemagne, is well known. It is not so generally known that in England, by the laws of King Ina (A.D. 693), every child was to be baptized within thirty days of its birth under severe penalties; and he who allowed his child to die unbaptized was to forfeit all his goods.

ceremonial imposition of His name on the eighth day, and His presentation in the temple when He was forty days old ; if not also in His observance of the Jewish Sabbaths and feasts.

In the absence of any direct injunction to baptize the infant children of Christian believers, it is possible that an improper use is sometimes made of the familiar words, "Suffer the little children to come unto Me." In the Anglican baptismal office they are introduced much as if they had been uttered in that connection ; and the same thing not infrequently happens in the unwritten ritual of the Free Churches. But recognition of an abuse should not lead us to undervalue the sign which our Lord thus afforded of His tender regard for little children. The objection of the Montanists, and other ancient anti-paedo-baptists, grew chiefly out of a notion that sins after baptism were less easily forgiven ; those of the sixteenth century Anabaptists—to whom the Mennonites and modern Baptists are historically related—seem to have grown out of

the newly-revived Augustinian theology. According to that system, no individual of the fallen human race could be acceptable to God until he had undergone a spiritual regeneration; and, as there could be no evidence of this until the years of intelligence, it seemed reasonable to defer baptism until such evidence appeared. Without here discussing the Augustinian theology, it may be observed that our Lord did not wait for any such evidence in the children of whom He said "Of such is the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. xix. 14; Mark x. 14; Luke xviii. 16); nor, so far as appears, in the child of whom He said: "Whoso shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven (Matt. xviii. 4, *and cf.* Mark ix. 36 *fig.*; Luke ix. 47 *fig.*). And in view of His constant bearing towards the young, the weak, and the simple, it is hard to suppose that He would have refused the initiatory rite of Christian discipleship to these, any more than to those elder children whose hosannas He ac-

cepted, saying, "If these shall hold their peace, the stones will cry out" (Luke xix. 40 R.V., *and* cf. Matt. xxi. 15, 16).

The analogy of circumcision has been urged both for and against the baptism of infants. On one side it is argued that, as under the older dispensation children at eight days old received the seal of a Divine covenant in which they were interested, if children under the new dispensation were excluded from the corresponding sacrament they would be in a worse position than the Jews. On the other hand it is replied that Jewish children were circumcised because, before circumcision, they were born Hebrews; and in like manner none should be baptized unless they have already become Christians by spiritual regeneration. The truer parallel seems to be that, by the old law, two classes of persons were circumcised; those who were born into the Hebrew nation, and those who voluntarily sought admission into its pale: so, according to our Lord's institution, two classes of persons should

be baptized; those who are born into Christian discipleship, and those who voluntarily enter into it. And in the case of baptism, as of circumcision, the head of the household has a right to decide for those naturally subject to his authority, unless they personally repudiate his decision.

The conclusion to which we are naturally led from the terms of our Lord's commission, the recorded practice of the apostles, and the usage of the primitive Church, is as follows:—Baptism should neither be administered indiscriminately, nor restricted to those who have presumably experienced a spiritual renovation; but should be conferred (1) on all who desire, freely and intelligently, to be enrolled as disciples of Christ, unless disqualified by manifest ungodliness; and (2) on those children for whom it is desired by their parents or natural guardians, provided there is a reasonable prospect of their being brought up "in the nurture and admonition of the Lord."

With regard to the amount of knowledge

that should be required of adult candidates as a preliminary to baptism, the usage of the second and third centuries is fairly represented by the summary called "The Apostles' Creed."* And from the instructions reported in the Acts of the Apostles, as having been given by Peter and Paul to unbaptized hearers—both Jew and Gentile—it is probable that usage did not differ very widely from the apostolic practice.

* Strong reasons were adduced by the late Rev. A. H. Wratislaw for thinking that the earliest form of this venerable confession originated in the Church at Ephesus, within the apostolic age.

IV.—What are the Effects of Baptism.

It is scarcely possible to find, in the whole range of Christian literature, more inflated and extravagant language than was used by many early writers about the supposed effects of baptism. Even in the earlier half of the second century we find such assertions as these: "We descend into the water full of sin and defilement but come up bearing fruit in our heart" (Barnabas); "They descend into the water dead, they arise alive" (Hermas). A little later the apostolic commission to teach and baptize is called "the power of regeneration unto God" (Irenæus); "Is it not wonderful, that death should be washed away by bathing?" (Tertullian). In the fourth and fifth centuries baptism was called "a deliverer from lusts, which lifts one up to the higher life" (Gregory Nazianzen); it was

supposed to "loosen the band of sin," and "regenerate in Christ the man who was generated in Adam" (Augustine). Sins committed after baptism were thought to be less easily pardoned; on which account some deferred baptism till the approach of death. These ideas were still further developed in the middle ages.

The authoritative teaching of the Church of Rome is, that "such is the admirable efficacy of this Sacrament, as to remit original sin, and actual guilt, however enormous": by it "sin is utterly eradicated, and the soul adheres entirely to God." Concupiscence, it is admitted, is not destroyed; "its guilt is pardoned, but its infirmity remains." "Our souls are replenished with Divine grace; by which, rendered just and children of God, we are made co-heirs to the inheritance of eternal life." "We are united to Christ, as members to their Head," so that from His fulness flow to us "Divine grace and virtue . . . qualifying for the performance of all the offices of Christian piety." Moreover, "we are

sealed with a character that can never be effaced from the soul"; whereby Christians are not only distinguished from non-Christians, but are "qualified to receive the other Sacraments." To obtain these benefits, indeed, faith is required; but in the case of infants "their incapacity is supplied by the faith of their parents"; or, if these be unbelievers, "by that of the universal Society of the Saints." (See the "Catechism of the Council of Trent.")

Even Luther affirmed of baptism that it "worketh forgiveness of sins, delivers from death and the devil, and confers everlasting Salvation on all who believe." Becon, one of the English Reformers, said, "it removes from the fierce judging-place to the Court of Mercy"; and the catechism of the Anglican Church declares that by it one is "made a Member of Christ, a Child of God, and an inheritor of the Kingdom of Heaven"; while in the Anglican "Articles of Religion" it is asserted that "as by an instrument, they that receive baptism rightly are

grafted into the Church faith is confirmed, and grace increased by virtue of prayer to God."

For the producing of these effects, according to the teaching alike of Romanists, Lutherans, and Anglicans, no qualification of office or character on the part of the administrator is indispensable. Baptism ought, indeed, only to be performed by a duly ordained minister of the Church; but in case of urgent need it may be administered by any person whatever; and such "lay baptism," even if the case be not urgent, though irregular, is not therefore invalid. The Presbyterians, on the contrary, lay the utmost stress on the qualification of the administrator; in their view the rite is an absolute nullity unless performed by a duly ordained Minister of the Gospel.

According to the Presbyterian "Confession of Faith," baptism was instituted "for the solemn admission of the party baptized into the visible Church;" and "to be to him a sign and seal of

the covenant of Grace, of his ingrafting into Christ, of regeneration, of remission of sins." It is added that "by the right use of this ordinance, the Grace promised is not only offered, but really exhibited and conferred by the Holy Ghost, to such (whether of age or infants) as that Grace belongeth unto, according to the counsel of God's own will, in His appointed time." But the bestowal of that Grace is not necessarily at the time of baptism, since it can only be received by a genuine faith. Children of other than believing parents are not presumably "within the covenant," so far as to be entitled to baptism: and the question whether the generally proffered "grace belongeth unto" any individual or not, is insoluble by any finite intelligence, as it depends entirely on God's eternal and secret decree.

It would be tedious and unprofitable to discuss these various dogmas and opinions in detail. Many of them are defended by arguments based on the confusion of literal and figurative expressions in Holy Scripture, or by giving a general

application to statements of which the true sense is limited or personal. Others appear to have been developed in a laborious endeavour to harmonise traditional beliefs with a theological system with which they are inconsistent. The common root of many of them, and of others yet more extravagant, was a failure, in the early Christian ages, to distinguish between the visible Church, consisting of the whole number of professed adherents to the Christian religion, and that spiritual Church which is the invisible fellowship of all true believers.

To enter into this spiritual fellowship is to become a Christian in the higher and truer sense of the word. In order to do this, one must needs experience that inward renewal which our Lord calls being "born again," and "born of the Spirit" (John iii. 3, 5), and which is commonly spoken of as "regeneration." But the term "Christian" is also used in a looser sense, to denote a mere adherent or professor of Christian discipleship; and "regeneration" is

also the proper translation of a word, altogether different from that in John iii., which is only found twice in the New Testament. Our Lord uses it in Matt. xix. 28, for the new state of things which He came to bring about, and Paul uses it in Titus iii. 5, for something which he associates with, and yet distinguishes from, "the renewing of the Holy Ghost."

Now, baptism was, in the first ages of Christianity, the rite of formal initiation into the visible Church. The moment before its administration a man was outside the fellowship, and, accordingly, was not accounted a Christian; the moment after he was within, he was "christened." He was now thought to have entered upon a new life, and was, therefore, said to be "regenerated," in token of which it was usual to assume a new name. To this our Lord was supposed to refer in John iii. 5, where He spoke of being "born of water," as well as "of the Spirit," as a condition of entering into the kingdom of God. Whether or not this supposition

was correct, it seems not unlikely* that baptism was what Paul intended by "the laver of regeneration," in Titus iii. 5. It is not, therefore, surprising that men should have confounded the lower with the higher sense of the word "Christian," and imagined that, by baptism, they were actually made "members of Christ." Nor can we wonder at some confusion of thought between *ecclesiastical* regeneration, which consisted only in entrance by baptism into a Christian profession, and that *spiritual* regeneration of which baptism is a symbol, which Paul calls "renewing of the Holy Ghost," which consists in rectification of the will, and which can only be wrought by the Spirit of God. It is mainly on this confusion of thought that sacerdotalists have built up the monstrous dogma that no unbaptized person is or can be a Christian; and that the act of baptism "christens," makes the reci-

* Whether this was Paul's meaning or not, is a question of no importance whatever to the present argument.

pient a Christian, whether he be adult or infant, and totally irrespective of belief, morals, intelligence, or even consciousness.

Ezekiel had said, referring to the reality of which the Jewish ceremonial sprinklings were a figure, "Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean . . . A new heart will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you" (xxxvi. 25-7). When this figurative language was taken literally and applied to baptism, it was only too easy to imagine that the mere application of baptismal water would, in some mysterious if not magical way, procure spiritual renovation. Again, Peter exhorted his hearers at Pentecost to "Repent and be baptized, in the name of Jesus Christ, unto the remission of your sins" (Acts ii. 38). And Ananias bade Paul "Arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins" (Acts xxii. 16). When it was forgotten that, in each of these *particular* cases, repentance was presupposed, and that baptism would certainly be the avowal

of a genuine belief in that Saviour Who had lately been rejected or ignored, it is no great wonder that the mere rite of baptism was thought *generally* capable of remitting actual guilt, and utterly eradicating sin. Yet an unprejudiced study of the Scriptures quoted would have clearly shown that such conclusions were entirely fallacious.

Still, these mistakes might be comparatively harmless. It is far otherwise with the teaching of a large and, it is to be feared, increasing section of the Anglican clergy, with which, it must be owned, the teaching of the Prayer Book is in substantial agreement. According to the prescribed ritual, before the actual baptism prayer is made for the candidate (infant or adult), "that he *may be* born again, and made an heir of everlasting salvation"; immediately after the baptism it is said: "Seeing now, dearly beloved brethren, that this child *is* regenerate . . . let us give thanks"; and in a subsequent prayer these words occur: "We give Thee hearty

thanks, most merciful Father, that it *hath pleased Thee* to regenerate this infant with Thy Holy Spirit." It is not easy to explain this very differently from the manner in which it is taken by those ultra-sacerdotalists who affirm that there is no other regeneration than that which is effected in baptism ; that the grace then imparted may, indeed, be used or abused, and in the latter case a spiritual awakening may follow ; but that any subsequent "renewing of the Holy Ghost" is unnecessary and impossible. The harmfulness of this teaching it would be difficult to exaggerate.

The teaching of the Anglican Church Catechism, that by baptism one is "made a child of God," can scarcely be excused as originating in mere confusion of thought. There are only three senses in which any one can be a child of God. One is that absolutely unique sense in which the Lord Jesus Christ is "the only-begotten Son." Another is that general sense in which, as Paul affirms, quoting with approval the saying of a

heathen Greek, "We are also His offspring." The third is that of which it is written (John i. 12), "As many as received Him, to them gave He the right to become children of God, even to them that (not 'are baptized,' but) believe on His name." So evident is this, that some Anglicans teach, in direct contradiction of their own catechism, that in baptism we are not "made," but "declared to be" children of God—not making it very clear whether anything more is intended than that relation which is equally shared by "Jews, Turks, infidels, and heretics." That the baptismal rite does not of itself confer any higher sonship is abundantly manifest; for many unbaptized Quakers display, in large measure, "the spirit of adoption"; while many who are baptized with every circumstance of Anglican, Lutheran, or Romish ritual, display as clearly "the spirit that worketh in the children of disobedience."

On the teaching of the Presbyterian "Confession of Faith," it may be remarked that,

according to the theory of universal and unconditional preordination with which that confession is saturated, baptism can have no beneficial effect on any, infant or adult, who are not predestined to everlasting life. To such it is nothing better than a cruel mockery; since it is in semblance a "sealing ordinance," whereby grace appears to be "not only offered, but really exhibited and conferred"; and yet to them, by the secret and unchangeable purpose of God, that grace "belongeth not." For the elect, on the other hand, the ordinance is quite unnecessary, since their salvation is ensured, not by baptism, but by the Eternal Decree!

The application of water to the body, in whatever manner, by whomsoever performed, and whether with or without the utterance of words of Divine institution, is, in any case, a mere physical act. It is not only contrary to the whole genius of the Gospel, but in itself absurd, to imagine that a physical act can have

any moral or spiritual efficacy apart from the spiritual attitude of the recipient. According to that attitude, a physical act, if recognised as being of Divine appointment, may be in the highest degree beneficial, or altogether the reverse; and if the recipient be wholly passive or unconscious, as an infant or one in a state of insensibility, the effect will depend on the attitude in which he receives (not the act itself, but) the subsequent knowledge of its performance and signification.

Now baptism, as we have already seen, was designed for administration to two classes of persons; those who, of their own will, desire it as an avowal of Christian discipleship; and those who may be regarded as born disciples, or are designated for discipleship by their parents or natural guardians. In either case, its effects for good or evil depend largely on the spiritual attitude of the person baptized. On the adult its effect is immediate; on an infant it is for the most part deferred until intelligence is sufficiently developed

to understand the meaning of the rite. This meaning as before explained, is threefold : as an *emblem*, it represents that moral purification which is needed by all who are either stained with actual guilt or tainted with a natural bias toward evil ; as a *sealing ordinance*, it not only asserts the Lordship of Christ over the recipient, but conveys a pledge on His part of complete salvation, with all its attendant blessings, on condition of acceptance by a lively faith ; as a *sacrament*, it formally enrolls all who receive it in the number of Christ's disciples, and engages them to all the responsibilities of that relation.

We are now in a position to understand what are, and what are not, the effects of this ordinance.

(A.) *Negatively* : 1. Baptism does not regenerate, except in a purely antiquarian sense, quite different from that in which the word is commonly understood, whether by Sacerdotalists or by Evangelical Christians. It neither rectifies the

will, nor implants the germ of a spiritual life. It neither effects nor insures that "new birth" without which we are "dead in trespasses and sins." Indeed, it is quite possible to be "born of the Spirit" without baptism, as is proved by the experience of Baptists and Quakers innumerable.

2. Baptism does not Christen, *i.e.* Christianise, except in a sense that is both loose and inaccurate; nor does it initiate into the Church, except in a sense so indefinite as to be almost unmeaning.

3. Baptism does not make us Children of God in any sense whatever. In one sense, we are all His children, irrespective of baptism, faith, or character; in the higher and nobler sense we become such, not by any outward observance, but by heartily and loyally accepting the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

4. Baptism does not remit or eradicate sin; not original sin, for the perversion of the will

remains in them that are baptized; not actual guilt, for "a man is justified by faith," not by any ritual act, and "he that believeth (whether baptized or not) hath eternal life."

5. Baptism does not, of itself, infuse additional moral vigour, or enable us to attain any degree of graciousness or virtue which has not been attained by godly persons independently of baptism.

6. Baptism does not, in the slightest degree, affect the condition or prospects in a future life of those who die in infancy. Being free from actual guilt, they cannot have incurred any liability on their own account, from which they could be released by a religious ceremony. And if they be thought to have derived some liability from a sinful ancestry, He must surely be supposed to have discharged that liability who said "Suffer the little children to come unto Me." To baptize a dying child is altogether superfluous; and if such an act can be anyway justi-

fied, it is only because of the comfort that may accrue to Christian parents from the knowledge that the Good Shepherd's mark had been duly set upon the lamb which He has taken to His bosom.

In short, baptism confers no benefit, but involves in actual guilt those who, having reached the age of intelligence, receive it carelessly, formally, irreverently, or without a sincere purpose of discharging the responsibilities of Christian discipleship. It is thus, to the unbelieving, the thoughtless, and the hypocrite, a ministry of condemnation.

And what shall be said of those who, without any serious thought of the duty of Christian nurture, claim the initiatory rite of discipleship for their children merely as a matter of custom, or with a view to some secular object? The word "sacrilege" is almost excluded from the Nonconformist vocabulary; but surely no milder term can duly characterize the presentation of a child for baptism, merely to obtain a certificate,

or to comply with the rules of a friendly or insurance society.

To those, on the other hand, who receive it in faith, baptism (albeit void of the magical virtues ascribed to it by superstition and priestcraft) is a means of grace of the highest order. On this head we may affirm,

(B) *Positively*: 1. Baptism, on the part of the recipient, whether adult or infant, is a definite assumption of Christian discipleship. It is a formal entrance into the school of Christ, that we may learn of Him; the putting on of His livery, that we may be known as His servants; the adoption of His uniform, in token that we are enlisted on His side in the warfare of good against evil, and are committed to whatever discipline He may deem needful to train us for conflict and for victory.

2. Baptism, on the part of our Lord Jesus Christ, is an assurance of His willingness to receive us into His Kingdom of Grace; to work

in us that moral and spiritual cleansing of which the ritual washing is an appropriate emblem ; to bestow on us the forgiveness of sins, and an inheritance among them that are sanctified ; to instruct and train us for our appointed service on earth ; and, finally, after the changes and chances of this mortal life, to make us partakers in the life everlasting. But all this depends on our perseverance in faith and obedience, for "he that endureth to the end shall be saved."

3. Baptism is of precisely the same effect whether it be administered to an adult who thereby voluntarily enrolls himself among the disciples of Christ, or to a child whom the providence of God has designated for discipleship from its birth. True, the child has not, of his own will, entered into the school of Christ ; but, as a matter of fact, he is a learner therein. The covenanted blessings are assured on the same conditions in the one case as in

the other ; the only difference is that, for the child, the responsibility of the sacramental engagement, and the spiritual help derived from the Saviour's pledge, are deferred until the age of intelligence. And it is, surely, no despicable element in a Christian education to be taught, as soon as one is able to understand, that he has already received, as it were, from Christ's own hand a pledge of his personal redemption, and of all those blessings which shall assuredly be his own on condition of faith and obedience.

There has been much debate, from the middle ages onward, as to the *manner in which* sacramental ordinances produce their proper effects. Some affirmed that they only conferred grace *ex opere operantis*, that is, by virtue of the good motive and inward devotion of the recipient. Others represented them as conveying grace *ex opere operato*, that is, by virtue of an inherent power in the sacramental act itself. The latter is the doctrine of the Church of Rome, and is much favoured by Anglican sacerdotalists. In

extreme opposition to these opinions, the Swiss reformers reduce the importance of the sacraments to a minimum, regarding the Holy Supper as "nothing but commemoration," and baptism only as "a sign of admission into the visible Church." To Calvin, more than to any other theologian, the Church owes the restoration of the older and truer belief; that the sacraments are not merely signs, but also seals or pledges of Divine grace. It must never be forgotten that "the benefit symbolized in each sacrament is a supernatural bestowment, and not merely a natural effect; it is something coming directly from Christ, and not merely something resulting psychologically from the faith and obedience of the subject."*

* Dr. A. Mackennal; extract from a private letter, inserted by permission.

V.—Miscellaneous and Supplementary.

Having thus examined the Meaning, Mode, Proper Subjects, and effects of Christian Baptism, it remains to deal with some points of subordinate, but by no means of trivial, importance.

Between the practice of the Roman and Anglican Churches, on the one hand, and the Congregational, Presbyterian, Methodist, and other Evangelical Churches on the other, there is a remarkable diversity, especially in the baptism of infants. This diversity consists in the presence or absence of "sponsors," or, as they are commonly called, "godfathers and godmothers"; by whom the rite is demanded, and a profession of faith and obedience made, in the name of the child. These assistants at the baptismal rite are said to have been instituted by

Hyginus, Bishop of Rome, A.D. 139-143. They seem to have been at first merely guardians of the child's religious education; and much might be said in favour of such an arrangement, in view of possible orphanhood. But when the doctrine of hereditary and imputed guilt found credence, that of a vicarious faith was a natural and welcome relief; as Augustine expressed it, "He who has sinned by another may also believe by another." On this topic it is enough to say that while "original sin," in the sense of a bias toward evil, is alike a doctrine of Scripture and a matter of daily experience, the conceits of vicarious guilt and vicarious faith are alike repugnant to Scripture and to common sense.

It is argued in favour of the Anglican practice, that an infant may reasonably enter, by proxy, into a beneficial contract, the terms of which will be binding on himself when he comes to years of discretion. Now, the obligations into which baptized infants are supposed to enter "by their sureties," are, belief and obedience. No engage-

ment made by proxy can add force to the obligation which naturally rests on every creature, to obey the known will of God in all things. On the other hand, no obligation can bind a person to believe anything, however true or certain, unless it be commended to his judgment by sufficient evidence, or by reliable authority: belief, even in the truth, if otherwise grounded, is nothing better than blind credulity or unreasoning prejudice.

Moreover, it seems essential to a valid proxy that it be *authorized* by the person on whose behalf it is to be used. If not, it is at his discretion to adopt or repudiate the acts of his self-elected representative, who, in the latter case, must bear the responsibility which he has officiously incurred in the name of another. Such is the rule in courts of civil judicature; and one of Tertullian's objections to infant baptism was evidently grounded on a fear lest a similar rule might obtain at the Divine tribunal. "Why is it necessary, if there be not necessity [probably

'if there be not imminent danger of death,' but Tertullian's Latin is often obscure], that the sponsors likewise should be thrust into danger; who both themselves, by reason of mortality, may fail to fulfil their promises, and may be disappointed by the development of an evil disposition?"* No such danger can possibly arise from the practice of Congregational and other Evangelical Churches, wherein the child is regarded, in accordance with the fact, as a passive recipient of the Sealing Ordinance.

But the Anglican and Roman practice represents the child as a consenting party, a representation which is false in every particular. In many (it is to be hoped in most) cases the renunciation of the devil and all his works, the profession of belief, the desire that the child may be baptized, and the purpose of obedience, would be perfectly truthful if avowed by the sponsors on their own account. But the avowal is made

“in the name of” a child, by whom it was not, and could not possibly be, authorised; who does not renounce the devil, does not believe the articles of the creed, does not desire baptism, and does not purpose to lead a life of Christian obedience. In short, the sponsor is required to assume all the responsibilities of an unauthorized proxy; and in that character to utter, in the Roman ritual three, and in the Anglican four, unqualified falsehoods.

We proceed to consider some questions of ritual, which have been keenly debated :

1. *What Qualification is Necessary in the Administrator of this Sacrament?*—The Presbyterian churches, accounting baptism a formal initiation into the visible Church, insist on administration by a duly-ordained minister as essential to its validity. The Roman Church, deeming the rite practically indispensable to salvation, allows its performance—under certain conditions—by any person whatever. The same rule holds good in

the Anglican Church, though "lay baptism" is, as far as possible, discountenanced, and many attempts have been made to obtain authoritative declarations of its invalidity. These efforts were first put forth by the Puritans, to whom the administration of baptism, on emergency, by a woman seemed an intolerable scandal. They were resisted, at that time, by High Churchmen of the school of Whitgift and Bancroft. But from the Revolution onward the attempts to invalidate "lay baptism," so called, have chiefly proceeded from the High Church party; presumably with a view of discrediting Nonconformist ministrations.

It certainly does not appear that any official status was held by those disciples mentioned in John iv. 2, who administered Christian baptism before the setting apart of the twelve apostles, and whose act was accounted the act of Jesus Himself. Neither is there any express limitation to the apostles or their official successors in the Great Com-

mission (Matt. xxviii. 19). Nevertheless, inasmuch as our Lord has constituted not only teachers, but also overseers or pastors, in His Church, it seems most regular that the formal enrolment of disciples should be their official act, exception being allowed in cases of urgent necessity.

The question of baptism self-administered has rarely arisen. The case of "Smyth the Se-baptist," one of the precursors of the English Baptists, has been already alluded to. A few years ago a touching story was told of a Hindu lady of high caste, who became a Christian through reading the gospels. The only believer in a heathen household, she was unable to obtain baptism; and, being taken with a mortal sickness, she asked for a bowl of water, which she poured over her head, repeating the baptismal formula. It would be hard to call in question the validity of that sacrament.

2. How far does the Validity of the Sacrament

depend upon "Intention"?—The Church of Rome teaches that the intention to administer a valid sacrament is indispensable. This dogma was developed by a curious perversion of well-intended casuistry. In the eighth century, an ignorant priest having used a jargon of unmeaning words instead of the regular baptismal formula, the Pope very reasonably decided that his *intention* was sufficient to validate the rite. But the converse also came to be insisted upon; with the monstrous, though perfectly logical, result that, by secretly withholding the necessary intention, a priest might defraud a dying child of the only possibility of salvation. Truly, a *reductio ad absurdum* of the Romish doctrine! It seems more reasonable to think that the needful intention is that of the recipient; or, in case of a child, that of its parents.

3. *Does the act of Baptism depend for its Validity on its being accompanied by any particular Words?* That it is so dependent, has been all but univer-

sally held by ecclesiastics of all parties, from the third century to the nineteenth. Yet it is remarkable that the command is to “baptize into the Name, &c.,” not to “baptize, saying, ‘I baptize in the Name, &c.’”^{*} Moreover, there is no recorded instance in the New Testament of the actual use of the ecclesiastical formula. Furthermore, if the validity of Christian baptism depends on “unfailing use of Christ’s words of institution,”[†] it is more than doubtful if there be any valid baptism either in the Anglican or the Roman Church! For “Christ’s words of institution,” as recorded in the Gospel, are *eis to onoma*, “INTO or UNTO the name,” or in Latin “in nomen”; whereas the Anglican ritual prescribes “IN the name,” and the Roman “in nominé,” which in Greek would be *en onomati*. We cannot, therefore, admit that the traditional, or any, formula is indispensable. But short of this, there is the strongest

^{*} In the Greek Church the formula is, “N. is baptized into the Name,” &c.

[†] Words of Resolution at Lambeth Episcopal Conference, 1888.

possible reason for the unfailing rehearsal of the Threefold Name ; not merely in deference to the almost universal judgment of Christendom ; but that there may be no possibility of mistake about the meaning of the act ; and that irregularity may not be a stumbling-block to faith, or a grief to the consciences of weak brethren.

4. *Is it of any importance whether or not Baptism be publicly administered ?*—It is certain that neither the Ethiopian eunuch nor the Philippian jailer was publicly baptized ; and it naturally follows that publicity is by no means essential. Still, in the absence of any serious obstacle, it is surely more becoming that either man or child should be enrolled as a disciple “before many witnesses,” than that the act should be performed in the frigid sanctity (?) of an empty church, or in the seclusion of the domestic fireside. Such privacy is too suggestive of being “ashamed of the Gospel of Christ” ; and it would not be surprising if some, who favour the practice amid

Christian surroundings, should raise that very objection in the case of a heathen or Mahommedan convert, whose public baptism would expose him to the danger of a speedy and violent death.

5. *In what circumstances, if any, may Baptism be refused or delayed?*—If the rite is, as we maintain, essentially an enrolment among the avowed disciples of Christ, its administration must certainly be improper in cases where it can have no such significance. There is no warrant, either in Scripture or common sense, for baptizing those children of unbelieving and ungodly parents concerning whom there is every reason to expect, not that they will be educated in Christian discipleship, but that they will be trained in all ungodliness. It was to guard against such profanation that sponsors were originally instituted. They were sureties, not for the child's faith and obedience, but for its religious education in case of the death or apos-

tasy of the parents. In like manner, it would be a sacrilegious farce to baptize an adult applicant whose indifference, open ungodliness, or persistence in known sin should render it evident that he was destitute of that sincerity of purpose which is inseparable from true discipleship. But no former crimes, however great or numerous, if truly repented and forsaken—and certainly no obligation assumed in a state of heathenism—can afford any sufficient ground for refusing or delaying the baptism of a sincere and intelligent convert.

6. *Can Christian Baptism be repeated?*—On this point there has been, from the first, a degree of unanimity without parallel in the whole history of religious opinion. It has always been held that baptism is the beginning of a new relationship with Christ and His Church, however that relationship may have been understood, and a thing cannot have two beginnings. A penitent restored to Christian fellowship after the grossest

crimes, or even after avowed apostasy, has never been rebaptized. The seeming exceptions—Catholic, Donatist, or Baptist—only confirm the rule; for, in every such case, the former baptism has been regarded as a nullity, owing to some defect of authority, intention, or ritual. In the event of such a question now arising, the apostolic maxim must apply—that “the strong should bear with the infirmities of the weak.” If a person has been baptized into the Threefold Name, by whomsoever, in infancy or mature age, with much water or little, no Church officer or religious society has a right to insist on any further baptism as a condition of fellowship. But if a person has doubts about the sufficiency of his own baptism, whether on account of the administrator, the ritual, the quantity of water applied, the lack of consent on his own part, or what not, the rite should be repeated *conditionally*,* and

* This was the ancient rule, when it was doubtful whether a person had been formerly baptized or not.

in whatever manner may be needful to satisfy his conscience.

7. *What Relation is there between Baptism and the Lord's Supper?*—It is not necessary to adopt the Romish doctrine of a mysterious and ineffaceable “character” impressed in baptism to justify the all but universal judgment of the Church that the one sacrament is an indispensable preliminary to the other. While the word “Church” is, confessedly, ambiguous, it is generally admitted that the Lord's Supper is a “Communion of Saints”—of such as at least profess personal devotion to the Lord Jesus, and avow themselves members of “the Church, which is His body.” Now baptism, as we have seen, initiates into a kind of discipleship which does not necessarily imply this personal devotion. It seems, therefore, reasonable that none should participate in that Royal Banquet, which is designed for the *inner* circle of our Lord's disciples, without first re-

ceiving the sign of initiation into the *outer* circle of His adherents.

But there is another side to this question. In the early Christian centuries all the baptized were communicants. After a time the practice of infant communion was, rightly, abandoned ; though, it may be feared, rather on account of new developments of superstition than of clearer views respecting the true relation of the sacraments. Later it came about, partly through the wholesale and indiscriminate baptism of tribes and nations, and partly as the result of a theological system, that baptism was thought of as an ordinance for the many, and the Lord's Supper as an institution for the elect few. It may fairly be doubted which was the greater error. However, those responsible for the Christian nurture of baptized children should keep this fact steadily in view, not for themselves merely, but for those under their charge ; that initiation into the outer circle was designed as preliminary to entrance into the inner circle, the

Baptismal Washing as the first step toward the Royal Banquet.

It is, perhaps, scarcely respectful to the intelligence of those who may read these pages to mention a drivelling superstition, which has been sedulously fostered in the interest of priestcraft, that "a child has, properly, no name until it is baptized";* or, at least, that the name then conferred is peculiarly inalienable. As if the child of a Baptist or Quaker—nay, a heathen, a brute beast, or a thing without life—were not as properly and permanently named as any Anglican or Papist in Christendom. There is little to choose between this and the conceit of Dodwell the non-juror, "that immortality is conferred in baptism; but only if the ceremony be performed by an Episcopally-ordained clergyman"!

* As far back as A.D. 928 it was decreed in the laws of Howel Dda, Prince of Wales, (recension of Gwynedd), that "No one can be called by name until he is baptized." And the like has been insisted on by sacerdotalists within the present generation.

But while we treat these fatuities with befitting contempt, we must beware of emphasizing our protest against superstition and priestcraft by slighting or neglecting a divine ordinance. The grossest perversion of our Lord's command, if the result of invincible ignorance or honest misunderstanding, is less culpable than wilful or negligent disobedience. If it be urged that baptism is but an outward ceremony, the sufficient reply is that compliance or non-compliance with a positive injunction is a test of the inward disposition. If it be said, "Men can be saved without baptism, and none are saved merely because of it," we answer, True; but it is equally true that a disciple who persistently neglects this ordinance shows, by his neglect, that he is not saved from the sin of disobedience.

We must thus guard at once against the superstitious perversion of the ordinance and the sinful neglect of it; using baptism, like every other good thing, as not abusing it. Meanwhile, let none rest satisfied with the outward and

visible sign : " he that believeth and is baptized shall be saved ; he that disbelieveth (whether baptized or not) shall be condemned." Let none think that " the laver of regeneration " is the same thing as " the renewing of the Holy Ghost," or in any way a substitute for it ; or that because a man is " born of water " he has therefore entered into the Kingdom of God. Baptism is the sacrament of discipleship, not of union with Christ. Jesus had many disciples who " went back, and walked no more with Him " (John vi. 66). Judas was a disciple, yet none the less a " son of perdition " (John xii. 4, xvii. 12). Simon was baptized, yet his heart was not right with God (Acts viii. 21). The baptism that saves is not the formal Sacrament ; " not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience towards God " (1 Peter iii. 21). This answer can only be made by those who have received that inward cleansing of which all ritual purifications are a figure : a cleansing wrought, as to actual guilt, by " the

blood of Jesus [which] cleanseth us from all sin" (1 John i. 7); and, as to the perverted will, by a "baptism of the Holy Ghost" (Matt. iii. 11). "For there are three that bear witness—the Spirit, and the Water, and the Blood; and the three agree in One" (1 John v. 8).

Historical Note.

(See page 56.)

These cases are both in the fourth century. The first is the father of Gregory Nazianzen; when his children were born—between 320 and 330—he was a recent convert from a deistical or semi-Christian sect called “Hypsistarians.” The other is Monica, the mother of Augustine; when he was born, in 354, she was a Christian, but her husband was an unbeliever.

Several small sects in early times, like the modern Quakers, rejected Baptism altogether. But apart from these, no Christian community habitually left their children unbaptized before A.D. 1000. The contrary has been affirmed of the ancient British Church; but the statement rests on a misquotation—a mere printer’s blunder—in Fabian’s Chronicle, a book printed about 1512. Pelagius, the British “heretic,”

assured Pope Innocent I. that he had never heard of Christians who withheld baptism from infants. The warriors baptized on the eve of the Alleluia victory, in 429, are nothing to the point, as they are nowhere said to have been of Christian parentage. The baptism in infancy of St. David, about 480, and of Kentigern, about 520, is distinctly mentioned.

In short, with the qualified exception of Tertullian (who would certainly have baptized an infant in peril of death), the earliest Anti-paedobaptists, of whom history affords any trace, are found among the reforming sects of the eleventh century.





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